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5 May 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Trade and Services Division

FROM: Chief, Fuels and Power Branch

SUBJECT: Proposed Project to Study Factors Affecting the Capability and Will of North Vietnam to Continue the War

The following may be helpful in planning the proposed project.

1. CIA/RR EM SC 65-8, Recent Rise in Imports of Combat-Related Pharmaceuticals by North Vietnam and Communist China, published 28 December 1965, compares imports of combat-related pharmaceuticals in 1964 and 1965. Imports in 1965 appeared to be far in excess of requirements and suggested stockpiling in anticipation of a protracted or perhaps more intensified conflict. This report has been updated to include imports thus far in 1966. A memorandum from Chief, R/CH to Chief, St/CS, dated 21 March, indicated that imports of pharmaceuticals during the first quarter of 1966 continued at a high level, but that there was no dramatic increase. A similar memorandum of 29 April, was summarized in the CIA Memorandum, The Situation in Vietnam, dated 3 May. It indicated that there has been a sharp increase in imports of blood plasma and plasma substitutes. This probably does not indicate any change of intentions but more likely is associated with the drain on stockpiles caused by rising casualties. The estimated number of seriously wounded in the first quarter of 1966 is about 60 percent greater than in 1965. In addition to supplies consumed in treating battle casualties, blood plasma has been lost to US and ARVN forces. Evidence does not suggest, however, that North Vietnamese stockpiles have reached a critically low level. R/CH will continue to study this subject.
2. Project 25.4800, Petroleum Supply of North Vietnam, is being prepared by R/FP and T/TR. This project, scheduled for completion at the end of June, seeks to determine the capability of the petroleum supply system of North Vietnam to meet civilian and military requirements (a) under present conditions, and (b) in the event of interdiction of the supply by additional attacks on bulk storage facilities and/or by mining of ports. Its conclusions should be directly relevant to the proposed study of factors affecting the capability and will of North Vietnam to continue the war.


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3. The NMCC Operations Summary is now received by the CIA Operations Center, and is kept there for reference. Work on the proposed project might be facilitated if an additional copy could be obtained for use outside of the Operations Center.
4. The log book of the CIA Action Officer in the NMCC may be a useful source of information on aircraft losses in South Vietnam and Laos and for data on B-52 raids on South Vietnam. Copies of the log book are kept in the CIA Operations Center.
5. A point of contact in the Pentagon will be necessary, as it was during the preparation of Project 00.4771, The Record and Potential of Air Attacks in Attaining US Objectives in Vietnam. This point of contact should have knowledge of source material pertaining to both the air war and the ground war. Perhaps an officer in the NMCC PAC Division would be properly situated to give the necessary guidance.
6. Clarification of the time span to be covered by the proposed project would be useful. The end of 1964 might be a reasonable starting date for examining military build-up and probably would provide an adequate standard of comparison for damage assessment. For some topics, for example the pharmaceutical imports, an earlier base period may be required.
7. Statistical analysis of the rate of military build-up and of amounts of damage done cannot provide a direct answer to the question of the will of North Vietnam and of the Viet Cong to continue the war. Such analysis can, perhaps, measure capability, or the scale of effort required to give North Vietnam some hope of success in the pursuit of political and military objectives in South Vietnam. It may even provide indicators of intentions. But it will leave unanswered vital questions concerning morale and the will to persist in the face of heavy losses in economic and human resources.

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